

**STATEMENT OF NANCY FLOREEN  
ON RECONCILIATION OF FY04 OPERATING BUDGET  
May 15, 2003**

Today we're reaching the end of our work on the budget for the next fiscal year -- and what a challenge it has been!

I'd also like to thank our extraordinary Council staff. Their impressive dedication reflects a remarkable commitment to the people of this great community. They certainly made my life easier. To all of our staff members, I extend my heartfelt gratitude. I must give special praise to Dr. Glenn Orlin who has worked night and day on our transportation funding issues.

I would like to make a few brief remarks about the budget agreement we've reached today. First and foremost, it reaffirms that we understand what's important. We dedicate nearly \$1.5 billion to our public schools. This will let the school system maintain critical initiatives like reduced class size, all-day kindergarten, and enhanced literacy efforts. School enrollment is projected to reach 140,000 students next year -- the highest level ever. This budget meets the key needs of those students.

The budget also ensures essential services for our most vulnerable residents. We're providing pre-kindergarten to needy low-income children. We're funding home health aides to help seniors keep their homes -- and their dignity -- as long as possible. We fund transitional housing for the homeless. I wish we could do more for needy residents, but this is a caring budget despite the tight fiscal times.

And as the new Chair of the Transportation and Environment Committee, I'm pleased to say that this budget takes a big step forward. We're fully funding transit programs. We're adding new buses, including cleaner-running Compressed Natural Gas buses. And those buses will run more frequently and cover more routes than they have before. Our budget also dedicates funding to facility planning. This seed money will let us break ground on needed road and transit projects over the next four years. And we're not just building new roads – we're resurfacing existing ones. We won't let this winter's back-breaking snowstorms lead to axle-breaking road surfaces this summer.

Our budget also funds new bike trails, so residents can leave their cars behind and cycle. We're funding crosswalk and school zone enhancements, to make the walk to school safer for our children. And we're devoting substantial amounts to pedestrian safety improvements County-wide. In short, this budget begins to fund our chronically-underfunded transportation commitments.

On the whole, I think this budget is fair to all our residents. In the face of dramatic cuts from the Governor, we increase our commitment to public education. We maintain essential services. And we're moving ahead on long-delayed transportation and transit projects. The extraordinary fiscal constraints we're confronting have forced us to raise taxes and cut back on some services. But I believe our budget sets the right priorities and moves us in the right direction. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on these important issues.